

Message Text

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16

ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-13 MMO-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 EB-07 OMB-01 CU-02 /080 W

----- 085913

R 090835Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8230

INFO AMEMBASSY TOKYO

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: KS PINT

SUBJECT: KOREAN REACTION TO U.S. BICENTENNIAL

BEGIN SUMMARY: KOREAN PRESS AND PRIVATE REACTIONS TO U.S. BICENTENNIAL WERE UNIFORMLY POSITIVE. HOWEVER, UNDERCURRENT OF WORRY ABOUT U.S. WILLINGNESS TO FULFILL WHAT IS SEEN HERE AS ITS INEVITABLE ROLE AS LEADER OF FREE WORLD WAS ALSO PRESENT. END SUMMARY.

1. U.S. BICENTENNIAL JULY 4 CELEBRATION RECEIVED MAJOR COVERAGE IN THE KOREAN PRESS. THE SEVEN VERNACULAR DAILIES OF NATIONAL CIRCULATION, ALL PUBLISHED IN SEOUL, HAVE EACH BEEN CARRYING OWN SERIES OF BICENTENNIAL ARTICLES. IN ADDITION, SIX OF THE SEVEN CARRIED EDITORIALS ON JULY 3, 4, OR 5.

2. IN GENERAL, EDITORIALS EXPRESSED CONGRATULATIONS AND WISHES FOR CONTINUED U.S. PROSPERITY. WRITERS ANALYZED THE FACTORS LEADING U.S. TO ITS LEADING ROLE IN WORLD TODAY, MOST OFTEN CITING WILLINGNESS TO DEFEND FREEDOM FRONTIER SPIRIT, AND INFLUENCE OF PURITANS. SEVERAL EDITORIALS BRIEFLY TRACED HISTORY OF US-KOREAN RELATIONS SINCE 1882.

3. WRITERS ALSO CITED PROBLEMS U.S. FACES, MENTIONING AFTERMATH

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OF VIETNAM WAR, WATERGATE AND OTHER SCANDALS, POLLUTION, HOUSING,

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY FOR BLACKS, AND CRIME. WRITERS TENDED TO END ON UPBEAT, WITH PROGNOSIS THAT U.S. WOULD NEVERTHELESS OVERCOME ITS PROBLEMS, BECAUSE OF ITS "PURIFICATION POWER AND GREAT ADAPTABILITY" (TONG-A ILBO), AND WITH WISHES FOR CONTINUED "PROSPERITY" AND "BLESSINGS OF GOD" (SEOUL SHIN-MUN).

4. ANOTHER THEME OFTEN SOUNDED WAS IDEA THAT U.S. IS GUARDIAN OF LIBERTY AND PEACE IN WORLD, COMBINED WITH AN APPEAL TO U.S. TO CONTINUE THAT ROLE. IN THIS REGARD, THE OFFICIAL SEOUL SHIN-MUN SAID, "ALL FREE WORLD NATIONS INVARIABLY WANT THE U.S. TO SAFEGUARD PEACE IN THE WORLD THROUGH STRENGTH SO THAT THEIR INDEPENDENCE CAN BE PROTECTED. THE U.S. SHOULD NOT FORGET THE MISSION IMPOSED ON IT BY THE TIMES." ALSO, MASS-CIRCULATION HANGUK ILBO SAID THAT THE MESSAGE KOREA IS SENDING TO U.S. THROUGH ITS "BELL OF FRIENDSHIP" IS THAT "AMERICA SHOULD KEEP IN MIND THAT SHE HAS A RESPONSIBILITY TO TAKE CARE OF ALL OF HER FRIENDS IN THE WORLD."

5. PRESS ALSO SOUNDED THEME OF KOREAN SELF-RELIANCE. MOST STRIKING EDITORIAL EXAMPLE APPEARED IN CHOSUN ILBO, WHICH, IN POINTING OUT KOREANS' PAST "UNRESERVED AND DEEP-ROOTED TRUST" IN U.S., NOTED IN ADDITION "A COLD, REALISTIC CHARACTER" IN AMERICANS, CITING T. ROOSEVELT'S "NEUTRALITY" AT TIME OF ANNEXATION BY JAPAN, DIVISION OF KOREA AT YALTA, AND NIXON DOCTRINE. IN DESCRIBING U.S. INFLUENCE ON KOREA, WRITER, NOTING THAT, IN FIRST STAGE (UNTIL 1945), MAIN INFLUENCE WAS "SPIRITUAL," AND IN SECOND STAGE (30 YEARS SINCE 1945), MATERIAL CULTURE ALSO WAS ACCEPTED, CONCLUDED THAT, IN THIRD STAGE, KOREANS SHOULD ACCEPT "INTERNAL SPIRIT OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE:" SPIRIT OF DEMOCRACY, SELF-RESTRAINT, ECONOMIZING TRAITS, AND MODESTY. WRITER REJECTED "INDISCRIMINATE ACCEPTANCE" OF SUCH AMERICAN TRAITS AS CURRENT "PLEASURE--SEEKING DECADENCE," OR OTHER ASPECTS OF "SUPERFICIAL AMERICA." BY THUS "FILTERING AND PURIFYING" CULTURE THEY ACCEPT FROM U.S., AND INCREASING THEIR NATIONAL STRENGTH TO COPE WITH U.S. POLITICALLY, KOREANS WILL BE ABLE TO DEEPEN TRUST OF U.S. AND THUS LEARN STILL MORE FROM U.S.

6. IN PERSONAL CONTACTS EMBASSY OFFICERS HAD DURING JULY 4 PERIOD, TRADITIONAL WARMTH OF KOREANS TOWARD U.S. WAS PARAMOUNT. UNDER THIS, HOWEVER, AT LEAST TWO WORRIES EMERGED. FIRST WAS LONGER-STANDING WORRY OVER U.S. POLICY OF DETENTE AND INABILITY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TO UNDERSTAND HOW U.S., THOUGH SO STRONG, COULD REFRAIN FROM PURSUING POLICIES OF CONFRONTATION WITH COMMUNISM ON ALL FRONTS. SECOND WAS NEWER. IT COMPOUNDS THE FIRST SUGGESTION FROM KOREANS THAT U.S., POWERFUL THOUGH IT IS, MAY NOT BE ABLE TO SOLVE ALL ITS SOCIAL PROBLEMS, SUCH AS PERMISSIVENESS, WITH WORRY ABOUT U.S. TENDENCY TOWARD NEO-ISOLATIONISM. THIS LENT A CERTAIN PLEADING QUALITY TO KOREAN APPEALS THAT U.S. NOT ABJURE ITS WORLD ROLE. SNEIDER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, PUBLIC ATTITUDES, BICENTENNIAL CELEBRATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 09 JUL 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: BoyleJA
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976SEOUL05305
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760266-0808
From: SEOUL
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760774/aaaacmki.tel
Line Count: 115
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: BoyleJA
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 28 MAY 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <28 MAY 2004 by ElyME>; APPROVED <22 SEP 2004 by BoyleJA>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: KOREAN REACTION TO U.S. BICENTENNIAL BEGIN SUMMARY: KOREAN PRESS AND PRIVATE REACTIONS TO U.S.
TAGS: PINT, PFOR, KS, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006